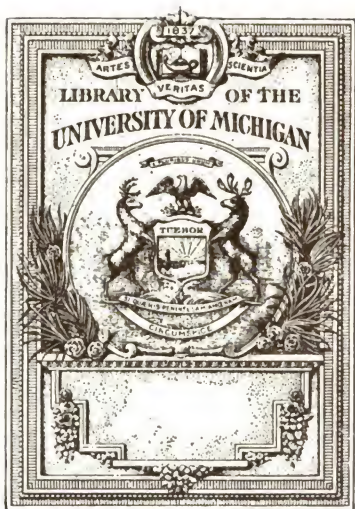


Anthony Aston, stroller and adventurer

Watson Nicholson,
Colley Cibber



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ANTHONY ASTON

STROLLER AND ADVENTURER

To which is appended Aston's *Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber's Lives*; and *A Sketch of the Life of Anthony Aston, written by Himself.*

By

WATSON NICHOLSON, Ph. D.

Author of "The Struggle for a Free Stage in London," "Six Lectures on American Literature," "Sources of Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*," etc.

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FOREWORD

Writing twelve years after Milton's death, in *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*, old Winstanley, the royalist, disposed of the author of *Paradise Lost* in exactly eighty-two words. Shakespeare, escaping the political odium enveloping the blind poet, came off a trifle better. Other early biographers of the English Stage and Drama disclosed similar exaggerations and eccentricities; but when we find, later, one of them devoting twice as much space to Tony Aston as to Shakespeare and Milton combined, we are aware that proportion and perspective are wanting, or that there was a woful lack of material and judgment. However, when the editors of the latest edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* reserve a niche for the effigy of Anthony Aston, we do not feel called upon for an apology for this brochure.

This sketch of Aston's life is brief, but—

Ther n'as namore to telle.

Short as the account is, the details contained in the following pages represent all that is

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known about the once famous wag, and are now published for the first time since Aston's death. In addition to the *Sketch*, the discovery of which is herein recorded and the document itself printed in full, it has been thought opportune to reprint the *Brief Supplement* and also Chetwood's account of Aston; thus collecting in one place all that is known of and about Tony Aston.

W. N.

"Deer Lodge"
South Haven, Michigan,
July 4, 1920.

ANTHONY ASTON: STROLLER AND ADVENTURER

The name of Tony Aston has been familiar to all men of letters, particularly to students of the Stage, for two centuries; and yet, so few real facts have been discovered, hitherto, concerning the man's life that we may assert without fear of contradiction, that practically nothing has been known about him, save that he was a strolling player for many years, the author of an unsuccessful play and the much more important *Brief Supplement* to Colley Cibber's *Apology*. Chetwood's *General History of the Stage* (1749) has been, until now, the sole source of our knowledge about Anthony Aston. This is the only reference mentioned by Baker in his sketch of Aston in *Biographia Dramatica*, and it is the only work appended to his life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. A mere glance at Chetwood's three-page gossip account will suffice to show how really meager our knowledge of Tony Aston has been, up to this time. Even now, many essential details are wanting for a wholly satisfactory biography of the man.

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This paucity of information about Aston is the more surprising, inasmuch as during his own lifetime, he was so universally known in England and Ireland that his name was a mere byword that wanted no explaining. Not only had he played "in all the Theatres in London", but he was "as well known in every town as the post-horse that carries the mail". Probably no actor of his time, with the possible exception of Dogget, was known to so many people. Nearly every one who could raise a shilling for the purpose had been convulsed at Tony's grimaces. He was so familiar to all that his name grew into a figure of speech. After his own generation, however, until now, all that attached to the name of Tony Aston, making it a living personality, was forgotten, save the few choice samples preserved by Chetwood. Just as the old Drury Lane prompter, John Downes, is known to us simply as the author of the priceless *Roscius Anglicanus*, so Tony Aston has come down to us as the blackguard author of the no less rare *Brief Supplement*: the person who went by that name has vanished and left not sufficient for even a "sticks-and-rags" man.

At last, by one of those lucky stumbles, perpetually possible in the path of the researcher, much of this ignorance about the details of the

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life of Anthony Aston has been cleared away. One day, in the British Museum, about the time of the outbreak of the Great War, while leafing over some old and forgotten "drolls", trivial and sorry stuff even in their own time, I chanced upon a title-page that caused me to sit up and rub my eyes. There was something decidedly familiar about it; and yet I had never seen it before. It appeared in no library catalogue that I had ever seen, in no reference list, in no bibliographical table. If any one else had ever seen it, he had failed to report the fact. This was the title-page:

A
S K E T C H
O F T H E
L I F E, &c.
O F

M r. A n t h o n y A s t o n,
Commonly call'd TONY ASTON.
Written by Himself.—Now *All Alive*.

There was no mistaking the pages which followed this announcement,—they were written by the author of the *Brief Supplement*. Meager as this sketch is,—it was intended only as a synoptical outline of a more complete autobiography—it supplies us with a multitude of

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facts, hitherto inaccessible, about the life of Anthony Aston; in fact, it is our first real account of the man. I have gone to some pains to verify (whenever possible) every statement made by the author, and have spanned the breaks in the narrative with the necessary historical connections. For this, in the main, I have relied upon sources contemporaneous with Aston's own account.¹

I.

According to the *Sketch*, Anthony Aston was the son of Richard Aston of the Staffordshire branch of that numerous family. His mother was of Irish birth, the daughter of a Colonel Cope, County Armagh. Tony was, therefore, half Irish, which may or may not account for his native wit. However, the nationality of his mother does assist us to identify the father of the subject of our story. There were two Richard Astons of Staffordshire. One, the grandson of Sir Walter, first Lord Aston, was too young to be the father of Tony; and, besides, the records show that that Richard Aston married Jane Colclough. The only alternative is that the other Richard Aston was the father of Tony. This Richard Aston was the third son in a fam-

1. Chief among these are, *The Flying Post*, *Postman*, *London Post*, *Dawk's News-Letter*, *London Gazette*, *English Post*, *Daily Courant*, and *Craftsman*.

ily of seven children, and his grandfather was the brother to Sir Edward Aston who, in turn, was father to Sir Walter first Lord Aston.¹ It would appear, therefore, that the Staffordshire Astons were highly respectable; and Richard Aston was no exception to this. A point is made of this fact as it throws light on Tony's remark in his *Sketch*, to-wit, "As for my Relations every where, I don't care a Groat for 'em, which is just the Price they set upon me". In other words, Tony was the recognized black sheep of the flock,—a fact safely vouched for by his amazing career.²

Richard Aston left Staffordshire before his marriage, and went up to London to pursue the study of law. He seems to have been highly successful; and his ability was much valued, for, in time, he became Principal of Furnival's Inn and Secretary of the King's Bench. Furnival's Inn³ was then situated on the north side of High Holborn, just east of Gray's-Inn-Road, between Brooke Street and Leather Lane. At the top of

1. *Staffordshire Pedigree* (nr. 1912), p. 10. For the Aston Coat of Arms, see Publications of the Harleian Society, 1912, vol. LXIII.

2. It is of passing interest to note that Richard Aston claimed relationship with Anne Bracegirdle, famous actress of the later Restoration period; and in the *Brief Supplement*, Anthony states that "Lady Shelton of Norfolk [was] my Godmother".

3. Furnival's Inn derives its name from the original occupants, the Lords Furnival. It is first noticed as a law seminary in 9 Hen. IV. In Richard Aston's time it was an Inn of Chancery attached to Lincoln's Inn. About 1818 it ceased to have any connection with any Inn of Court. In recent times it has been pulled down, the site being now occupied by the Prudential building.

Brooke Street (not many paces from the place where, at No. 39, the career of the youthful Chatterton was ended in 1770), is Brooke Market. Here lived Richard Aston, and here, probably, young Aston spent his earliest days. Richard Aston, "tho' a Lawyer, liv'd and dy'd an honest Man". He compiled a valuable book (1661) entitled, *Placita Latine Rediviva* which went through the third edition in 1673.

Naturally, the father chose for his son the profession of law. Tony's first tutor, from whom he got his earliest "tincture of whims", was one Ramsay "who first inoculated the Itch, and also good Latin". He was then sent to "my beloved Town of Tamworth" in Staffordshire, to complete his Grammar education. Here the boy proved father to the man, indulging in "innocent pranks", which accorded well with his "mercurial disposition". His experience at Tamworth he describes more picturesquely as "the early Seeds of Whim which push'd out in my Infant Puerility". In fact, throughout a long life, these same seeds never ceased "pushing out". It was probably at Tamworth that he first began to scribble poetry, though the best sample

1. Tamworth, at the confluence of the Tame and Auker, was a famous royal residence as far back as the Heptarchy. Offa's Charter to the Worcester Monks was dated from Tamworth, A. D. 781. About 910, Ethelfreda created a fortress there, which was nearly destroyed by the Danes, and later rebuilt.

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we have he declares he wrote at the age of seven.
He named it a burlesque

IN PRAISE OF PEACE

*One in a fight, when standing at his Ease,
Did boldly eat a piece of Bread and Cheese;
His Fellow ask'd him for a little Crumb,
Tho' not so big as Supernaculum:
The greedy Dog deny'd: why should he grudge
it?
He had above a Peck within his Budget:
But while his Hand cramm'd Meat into his Gul-
let,
His Mouth received a spiteful leaden Bullet.
Now Bread and Cheese lies trampled on the
Ground,
And such another Piece can ne'er be found;
So I'm resolv'd I never War will make,
But e'er keep Peace for Bread and Cheese's sake.*

"Says my School-master, *Antrobus*, Give
Aston nothing but Bread and Cheese these three
Days."

Whether Tony finished the course at the
Tamworth Grammar School we are not in-
formed. On his return to London, he was made
"an unlucky clerk" to a Mr. Randle of the Six
Clerks' Office. In this capacity he confesses,
with his usual frankness, that he was "unworthy"

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and "idle," doubtless dreaming of the days of his Tamworth "pranks". It was not long until he was "transplanted" to another office to learn the ways of the lawyer under a Mr. Paul Jodrel, for whom Tony had an unbounded admiration. Instead of sticking faithfully to the routine task of copying bills, answers, etc., the lad still "preserved his mercurials", and spent much of his time scribbling verse, reading plays, and going to the theatre. In brief, Tony was cut out neither for the law nor for any work that required systematic industry and habits of discipline.

At this juncture in his bringing up, young Aston went to see Thomas Dogget make comical faces "in the last two acts". This little experience proved to be the parting of the ways. He threw up the profession of law and went on the stage (he explicitly designates the "Old Play-House", and, again in 1735, in a whimsical speech delivered in the House of Commons, he states that he was "initiated there", *i. e.* at Drury Lane). His name does not appear in any of the play-bills of the day, and this, together with Chetwood's remark that he was never long at any one theatre, indicates that he was never given an important part; and he was too indolent, or restless for new experiences, to secure

his place even in a minor part. Tony's version of the case, however, is to the effect that he "succeeded in many Characters", and he went through life protesting to the last that he had no superiors in certain parts on the stage. At least in one character he had no peers, namely, that of Tony Aston. The fact is, he was a soldier of fortune *de natura*, and anything that smacked of continuous and coherent effort was disagreeable to him. It is true, the time came, as to all such roving natures, when he must find a groove for himself to move in, but, even then, as we shall find, it was the nomadic life he chose, rather than risk the *ennui* growing out of the daily grind of a settled profession.

As to the exact date when Aston left Master Jodrel and went on the stage (as well as the dates of the other events of his checkered career) he is exasperatingly indifferent, or entirely silent. From internal evidence and several other correlated events, however, we may assert, with a high degree of probability that we are right, that it was in the year 1697 that he gave up the law and went to Drury Lane to serve Mimos. In his *Brief Supplement*, comparing Betterton and Powell, Aston says that the former was sixty-three, the latter forty, years of age, at the time of which he was writing. Evidently, these

reminiscences were of the time when he was best acquainted with the actors, that is, when he was associated with them. In other words, he had the season of 1697-'8 in mind. The correctness of this conjecture is supported by another statement in the same work. Writing of Dogget, he says that that comedian left the London stage at the latter end of King William's reign, "at which time I came on the Stage". This evidence is conclusive.¹ Dogget's name disappeared from the London play-bills at the close of the 1696-'7 season, and does not reappear in them for more than three years. This fact enables us to establish another date in Tony's biography. The late Mr. Joseph Knight (*vide Dictionary of National Biography*, Art. "Thomas Dogget") thought it probable that these three years were spent by Dogget in a visit to Dublin, the city of his nativity and the place where he began his histrionic career. Knight further states that Aston met Dogget in Norwich, but gives neither date, authority, nor excuse for injecting this fragmentary information into the biography. However, the matter may now be cleared up for the first time. In his *Sketch* (of which Knight

1. Since writing this passage, I have found complete verification of the conclusion therein deduced, in a warrant in the Lord Chamberlain's office in London dated November 23, 1697, for the arrest of Dogget for violating his articles and deserting the company acting in Dorset Garden. Dogget's articles are dated April 3, 1696, and were for three years.—Lord Chamberlain's Bks., Class 5, No. 114, p. 40, and *idem*, Class 7, Ser. 4.—

knew nothing) Tony tells us that, after leaving the London stage, he went over to Ireland, then returned to England and "travell'd with Mr. Cash, Dogget, Booker [and] Mins". Again, in the *Brief Supplement*, he says, "I have had the pleasure of his [*i. e.* Dogget's] Conversation for one Year, when I travell'd with him in his strolling Company". Now, we know that Dogget's company was travelling in 1699, for on January 27 of that year he performed at the Angel Inn, Norwich. It was then that Aston must have been with him, for it is the only year in which I have found Dogget's name connected with a strolling company in England, after he joined the patentees in 1690. On the night in question at Norwich, the gallery was so crowded that it gave way and many people were injured by the collapse. One child had its neck dislocated, a mishap which seemed to cause it small inconvenience, as Dr. Read, the King's *oculist* was present and succeeded in re-adjusting the member to the satisfaction of all concerned.¹ Dogget's company was much respected by the public, as "each Sharer kept his Horse", a special mark of the gentleman, which Tony proudly sets down in his *Sketch*. From a casual remark in the *Brief Supplement*, we conclude that Aston was a full sharer in Dogget's company.

1. *Daw's News Letter*, No. 412.

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The chronology for these years, therefore so far as Aston is concerned, appears to be as follows. In 1697 he abandoned the study of law and went to act at Drury Lane Theatre. Not succeeding there, nor at the other patent house, he joined Dogget in Dublin where he probably acted in 1698. The following year he travelled with Dogget's company in England, as already mentioned. These years filled Aston's imagination with the allurements of the stroller's life, with its ever shifting fortunes and adventures, and formed the determining factor in his later movements.

On leaving Dogget's company, Tony first tried his luck as a soldier. It is inconceivable that he should have chosen this profession of his own volition. It is more probable that his father placed him in the army for purposes of discipline. However that may have been, the father paid the piper, and Tony's happiest recollection of this period was that he took delight in "obliging" his "friend", Sergeant Callow, and posed as a young spark with a father of means. In spite of himself the drill in the manuals stood him in good stead at no distant date.

Anthony could not have been connected with the army for long, for within two years following his strolling with Dogget, we find him shift-

ing from one post to another in rapid succession. At the beginning of his *Sketch*, he asserts that he was a "Gentleman, Lawyer, Poet, Actor, Soldier, Sailor, Exciseman, Publican"—a very natural progression for such a character—and the sequence probably followed nearly in the order given, although it is not always easy to unravel the chronology of some of the jumbled and irrelevant jargon composing the brief account of his life. For instance, just when or why or how he secured the berth of Exciseman is a mystery; but it is likely that this was one of the numerous experiments whereby Tony was tried out to determine if he were really fit for anything in the world. This much is clear, the place was unsought by him, for, being born a gentleman, "I would not have you think", he says, "that I mention being an *Exciseman* as a credit to me; no, to screen *that*, I once pass'd [myself off] for a *Corn-Cutter*". He immediately drops the subject with a characteristically vulgar joke, and does not refer to it again. I place this experience of Tony's tentatively before that of his voyage overseas as the most probable order, although it may have fallen in a later period. However, from this on, for a considerable time at least, we are able to check up his movements with a

degree of satisfaction, by correlating his own account with known historical facts.

II.

The closing years of the 17th, and the beginning of the following, century were filled with stirring affairs for England; and for the next two or three years, Aston's shuttling movements were largely guided by political developments. The last years of King William's life had been spent in apprehension of, and preparations for, the final grip with the great menace which then, as now recently, threatened all Europe—an arrogant one-man rule. The ambitions of Louis XIV were scarcely veiled; and the death of Charles II of Spain near the close of 1700 was the occasion for "his most Christian Majesty" to set his plans in motion. The causes of the War of the Spanish Succession are too familiar to call for repetition here. Louis's candidate for the Spanish throne was his kinsman, the Duke of Anjou, whom he immediately sent to Madrid to secure the crown. The popular candidate in Spain, or more properly speaking, the candidate of the Grandees, was Charles, Archduke of Austria; but a declaration in his favor was sure to precipitate a war with France, and to avoid that contingency Spain threw herself into the arms of

Louis. Thus, (fortunately, as the event proved—witness Gibraltar) England found herself confronted by two foes instead of one. So far as England and France alone were concerned, there was a more irritating cause for hostilities than even the question of the Spanish Succession. When James II of England was deposed (1688), he sought an asylum in France where he was received as the rightful king of England; and upon his death (September 6, 1701), Louis at once hailed the Pretender as the legitimate heir to the English throne. This in itself was a sufficient cause for a declaration of war, but William of Orange died suddenly (March 8, 1702) before the formal step was taken. Less than two months later (May 4, 1702) Queen Anne issued the impending declaration of war.

Privateering and buccaneering had already commenced in the waters of the West Indies and along the coast of the colonies in America. No more welcome occasion could have offered itself to Tony Aston: it was the life for him. Near the close of 1701, he set sail for Jamaica in the brigantine *Diligence*. He has little to tell of the outward voyage, save that it consumed eleven weeks, and the captain placed him in irons for certain improprieties towards one of the passengers. On his arrival at Kingston, Aston applied

himself to the practice of law, in which he seems to have done very well, for, commenting on this experience, he says, "I kept my Horse, liv'd gay, pay'd all off". Running true to form, however, he was soon ready for pastures new; and we are able to test the accuracy of his statements by comparing his account with the shipping intelligence in the *London Gazette*, and from correspondence and news items as these appeared in the London prints from time to time. Thus we learn that Colonel Selwyn had been appointed Governor of Jamaica in April, 1701, but for one or another reason he did not arrive in the island until January, 1702. His first duty, of course, was to put the colony in a state of defense; and, doubtless, owing to Aston's service, brief though it was, in the army, the latter was invited to assist in the work, with, it would appear, the promise of the first vacant commission. Hope of advancement, however, was soon blasted. Governor Selwyn died soon after his arrival in Jamaica, and the Council for the colony appointed Peter Beckford to fill the vacancy until a royal commission should supply a successor to Selwyn. Meantime, occurred the death of King William; and in the Summer of 1702 Queen Anne appointed the Earl of Peterborough as Governor of Jamaica. For some un-

explained reason he never went out to the colony, and so Col. Thomas Handasyde (the "Mr. H. d e" of Aston's *Sketch*) was appointed in his room in 1703. Handasyde had been a lieutenant in the army under Selwyn, and was the virtual head of the government after his chief's death. According to Tony's own testimony, the new governor did not like him; hence, there was no hope of preferment from that quarter, and so he determined on moving his soldier-of-fortune's camp.

Once more our *picaro* took passage on the *Diligence*, this time bound for South Carolina. The "Manner and Horror" of this voyage was "inexpressible". They were cast away on the sands of Port Royal, only sixty miles from their destination. In answer to their "plaintive Guns", a Bermudan sloop came to their succour. After being plundered by his rescuers, Aston arrived in Charleston, S. C., "full of Lice, Shame, Poverty, Nakedness and Hunger". These sufferings were partly palliated by the kind treatment he received at the hands of Gov. James Moore, whom he afterwards accompanied on an expedition against the Spaniards at St. Augustine. The exciting episodes of this last mentioned exploit, our hero promises "will be described at large in a volume". This was the

book that never was written, more is the pity. Soon after these events, Moore was succeeded by that able man, Sir Nathaniel Johnson, who so assiduously and effectually guarded his capital that the Spaniards never once threatened his position. In one of the companies of soldiers organized by Johnson, Aston was made a Lieutenant of the Guard with a commission from the Governor. Tony, however, objected to the overbearing treatment accorded him by his Captain, "one Herne", and particularly "since he caus'd me to do that Duty he was to relieve [me of] every other Night", he surrendered his commission and once more tried a turn of the wheel of fortune. Before this, however, probably soon after his arrival at Charleston, he "turned *Player and Poet*", but not for long, we may imagine. He further states that he wrote a play on the country; but this *chef-d'oeuvre* has not been preserved.

When our adventurer left Charleston in a huff, he headed for North Carolina in a small sloop, with the ultimate aim of securing passage on some homeward bound vessel. The storm which drove the *Diligence* aground near Port Royal in 1702 was a dallying zephyr compared to the weather which they encountered on this voyage. If his memory did not play him a trick,

Aston was lashed to the helm for twelve hours, while his clothes were literally washed from his body. The little barque was knocked to pieces off Cape Fear, and Tony, like another classic sailor, found himself washed ashore on the bank of a small river. He too was relieved by a second Alcinoüs who cared for him a month, after which he returned to Charleston for a second attempt. This time (November, 1703) he steered for New York; but once more the storms pounded the ship fearfully and it was obliged to put into a Virginia harbour. After recuperating at the house of a Quaker, Tony and two fellow travellers borrowed horses and made their way to Newcastle, on through Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and finally arrived at New York. If all the details of these adventures had been set down in Aston's vernacular, they doubtless would rival anything with which fact or fiction has been adorned. It is a world of pities that Tony never got to the task of elaborating his notes of these exciting experiences.

Once in New York, he had the rare good fortune to fall in with a number of his old London acquaintances, who had on former occasions rendered him aid and who now again befriended him. The name of one of these appears frequently in the annals of the wars then waging,

Captain Henry Pullen, or Pulleyn. Aston spent this Winter (1703-'4) in keeping with his character, or, as he puts it, "acting, writing, courting, fighting". In the following Spring or early Summer, another attempt was made to return to England; and this time our wanderer was successful, albeit the voyage, like the course of Tony's career, was a circuitous one. By another run of good luck he was given free passage back to Virginia where he was "treated handsomely" by the Governor, Sir Francis Nicholson, whose guest he apparently was for some time,—at least one would assume that such was the relationship from Tony's own account. In January, 1704, the real opportunity to get back home came, when a portion of the British Fleet under Commodore Evans acted as convoy to some 500 sail bound for home ports. Though still a mendicant, Aston was yet in luck, for the "generous Captain Pulman of the *Hunter*" gave him his passage, and he was not less grateful to his "dear Captain Pullen" for his "punch and extraordinary."

The homeward voyage was relieved from monotony by a few brushes with the enemy, and on August 7, 1704 the Fleet anchored in the Downs. After an absence from England of about three years, filled with the experiences of

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the adventurer, Tony Aston found himself once more in London, penniless and with nothing in view. He was still in his early twenties, and the predominant trait in his character, thus far developed, pointed clearly to the mountebank. His good family connections had doubtless been drawn upon in more than one emergency; in no other way can we account for the almost invariable kind treatment he received from those high in position and authority. On the other hand, he had many good points to insure his getting along among strangers. He was possessed of a fair degree of honesty, was witty, a shrewd observer of human nature, and was a good judge of character. His inclinations, however, were unswervingly towards a low level. That he had histrionic ability there is no doubting; but everything about him, taste, experience, mental equipment, indicated the low comedian rather than the dignified wearer of the sock. As we have seen, it was to the business of grimacing that he invariably returned after he had tired of other ventures: so now, he drifted unerringly to Smithfield, it being the height of the "season" there. Here he proceeded to "settle down," at least to take a step in that direction, by getting married, as he informs us, to a "Bartholomew Fair lady", presumably an actress who later be-

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came "leading lady" in Tony's strolling Company.

III.

About this time, that is, soon after his return to London, it appears that Aston joined Colonel Salisbury's expedition to Portugal, with the promise of the first commission to fall vacant; but, as on a former occasion in the colonies, he was disappointed in this, and probably took no further part in the business. (He states in the *Sketch* that he had been in "Hispaniola", but makes no allusion to his experiences there.) Once more he turned stroller, and "continued up and down in England, Scotland, Ireland, acting". Just how long he continued swinging around the circle without a break, he does not tell us; but with the possible exception of a slight change in his course for a short period—an episode to be mentioned later—this probably marks the close of Tony's irregular wanderings, and the beginning of a half-century of regular routine strolling. The first five or six years of this long experience Aston seems to distinguish from the remainder of the period, for in a petition to Parliament in 1735, he says that "for twenty-five years past, my Medley . . . hath been admitted and applauded through Great

Britain"; and in his *Sketch* he mentions the fact that he "set up" his Medley after leaving off strolling, leaving the impression either that he had been travelling with some other company or that his Medley performances were in contradistinction to the amusements offered by the stroller. As a matter of fact Aston did not leave off strolling at all; he simply altered somewhat the character of his entertainments in about 1710, after which he regaled the public of the provinces with a hotch-potch bill which he very properly called a Medley. This was not of Tony's invention, but was the direct descendant of the so-called "drolls" of the Commonwealth period—a mongrel species of performances conceived to keep alive the histrionic art during the time when the theatres were closed. There are numerous examples extant of Tony's entertainments. They consisted of a concoction of numerous scenes (usually six or eight) taken from the chief stock plays, and had no more relation one to another than the numbers in a modern vaudeville bill or music hall "show". To these scenes were tacked an occasional prologue and epilogue, and, to add variety, dances and comical songs were interspersed. These furbelows were the product of Aston's "undaunted genius."

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From the advertisements in the newspapers of the time, and from the songs preserved in printed form, we learn something of the character of these performances—if performances they may be called, as their chief source of amusement lay in Tony's grimaces and in stage "business". Of course, the humorous songs, epilogues and prologues were often improvised to fit local conditions, making them the special features of the entertainment. As a typical programme of a feast of mirth offered by Tony to the hungry public, the following, taken from the *Daily Courant* for December 27, 1716, will serve as an illustration:

"Tony Aston's Medley From Bath.

Begins to Morrow, being Friday the 28th Instant [December, 1716], at the Globe and Marlborough's Head in Fleetstreet. He gives his humble Duty to the Quality, and Service to his Friends and Acquaintances, hoping they then grace his first Night, at 6 a-Clock, Price 1s. That Night's Entertainment will be, 1. A new Prologue. 2. Riot and Arabella. 3. Woodcock Squib and Hilaria. 4. Serjeant Kite and Mob. 5. Ben and Miss Prue. 6. Fondlewife and Laetitia. 7. Teague. 8. Jerry Blackacre and Widow. 9. The Drunken Man. 10. A new Prologue. With Dances, and new Conical Songs.

N. B. All this is perform'd by Mr. Anthony Aston, his wife, and son of 10 Years only, and will continue Nightly, Bills being stuck up of the whole Entertainment, which varies each Night".

Although Tony boasted that he was capable of contending with the best of 'em for the bays, it is perfectly evident that he was most successful in the horse-play scenes of the Restoration Drama. In these entertainments he merely attempted to impersonate the leading comedians of the day in their parts; and, indeed, it is improbable that he ever got much beyond the understudy. As an actor his originality consisted in "taking off" well known eccentric characters of the day. In this he was the immediate forerunner of Samuel Foote who copied Tony in more than one particular. Reverting to the above bill, the items varied from time to time, but the quality remained always about on one level.

This coming to London, as announced in the foregoing advertisement, cast the shadow of an expanding ambition on the part of Anthony Aston, an ambition that never got beyond the nursing stage. Hitherto, his "company" consisted of himself, wife and son. He now recruited it by four more actors and actresses and offered to the public taste an "Epitome of the

best Comedies" by his "additional Company". This was a mere feeler, which he immediately followed by announcing "the whole Spanish Fryar" for March 2, 1717; and thereby hangs a tale. Tony's advertisements at least were now quite as respectable as those of the two patent houses. The Drury Lane Theatre had been playing *Three Hours After Marriage*, while the new house in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields was offering *The She Gallant*, with singing by Cook, "and several Entertainments of Dancing by Mons. Mrean, Mrs. Bullock, and Mons. Salle and Mademoiselle Salle his Sister, the two Children".¹

Now, it was exactly because Tony aspired (whatever the motive) to something higher than his faddling Medley, that he ran amuck of the great orbs, Wilks, Cibber, and Booth at the Drury Lane Theatre, and John Rich at the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; for these managers claimed a monopoly of the acted legitimate drama in London. They would brook no encroachments on their patents, and, while it was not then usual for them to take any notice of the two "fairs" and the numerous "booths" about town, that "whole Spanish Fryar" was more than they were willing to swallow. The law supplied

1. *Daily Courant*, Jan. 18, 1717.

them with sufficient "instrumentalities" for silencing all opposition, and a simple mandate was usually sufficient. At any rate, we hear no more of Aston's attempt to represent the legitimate drama in London. The full force of the blow to Tony's hopes did not end with the suppression of *The Spanish Friar*, but struck at something more tangible and more vital than mere ambition. This will appear more clearly in the next announcement which he ventured to publish. About a week after the episode just related, the following appeared in the *Daily Courant* (March 11, 1717) :

"At the Desire of some Persons of Quality,
This present Monday will be Reviv'd
Tony Aston's Medley: Beginning at Six
a-Clock, at the Globe and Marlborough's
Head in Fleetstreet; when the Company
may hear that Surprising Musick without
Wind or String.

N. B. Mr. Aston performs to divert his
Friends Gratis, and hath Toothpickers to
sell at 1s. each."

It is the "N. B." part of this advertisement that holds the greatest significance for the student of the English Stage. It means something more than that poor Aston was obliged to abandon his big scheme to represent entire plays; it means

that the patentees were determined that he should not act at all in London. The "tooth-picker" dodge to evade the letter of the law is probably the earliest forerunner of later similar devices by which independent theatrical managers got around the "for hire, gain, and reward" protection of those specially privileged by royal patent. Thus viewed, this otherwise trifling affair assumes a dignified rank in a long struggle which resulted, more than a century later, in the abolition of the theatrical monopoly in London.

It is more than probable that the patentees began to hector Tony soon after his arrival in London from Bath, and, some weeks before the event just recorded, had almost succeeded in ousting him from his little kingdom in the Strand. On February 14, 1717, he was forced to this subterfuge:

"For the Benefit of a Gentleman in Distress,
This present Thursday, Tony Aston performs his Medley, at the Globe and Marlborough's Head in Fleetstreet, being the last time but one at this part of the Town".

The "Gentleman in Distress" was doubtless Mr. Anthony Aston. However, the trick seems to have worked, for the next day he made a new appeal to the public by borrowing directly from

the great managers themselves the stale device, "at the Desire of several Ladies and Gentlemen". A week later, he varied the ruse in the announcement that "several Ladies and Gentlemen have appointed to be at Tony Aston's Medley" on a given day. Emboldened by his success in hanging on longer than he had hoped to do, he now struck out on the venture which was early destined to wreck all his plans in London. Retaining the Medley for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he announced for the alternate days of the week, "a Contiguous Entertainment, beginning with a new farce on Tuesday next [February 26, 1717], call'd the Way of the Town: The part of Old Doodle by Mr. Aston, Eleanor his neice by Mrs. Aston, Quicquid a Comical Servant by Aston, Jun. and 4 other Characters by People capable to discharge them".¹ The progress after this was rapid to the "whole Spanish Fryar" affair, as already related, and the final collapse of the audacious scheme to beard the lion in his den.

Tony's meteoric appearance at the Globe and Marlborough's Head ceased with his Easter Week (1717) engagement there. "Up and down England" was again in order. It is unnecessary to follow him in these peregrinations. In fact, beyond the bald statement which he makes in

1. *Daily Courant*, February 22, 1717.

the *Sketch* that Ireland and Scotland were included in his itinerary, his condition "sometimes increasing, sometimes decreasing in Circumstances, Hopes, Friends, Patience—and still have liv'd handsomely by God's Providence—Force of my undaunted Genius", we know little or nothing of the details of his life for some years following his adventure in London. It is worthy of record that Tony, while abhorring and lamenting the illiberal treatment bestowed upon him by the patentees in London, applied the same tactics to his competitors *en route*. Chetwood, a contemporary of Aston's, thus illumines his monopolistic methods:

"He pretended a Right to every Town he entered, and if a Company came to any Place where he exhibited his Compositions, he would use all his Art to evacuate the Place of these Interlopers, as he called them. . . . If he met with a sightly house, when he was Itinerant, he would soon find the Name, Title, and Circumstances of the Family, curry them over with his humorous verse, and by this means get something to bear his Charges to the next Station. . . . If *Tony* by chance ever came to a Town where a Company of Showmen (as People call them) had got in before him, he presently declar'd War with them; and his general Condi-

tions of Peace were, that they should act a Play for his Benefit, that he might leave the Seige, and march with his small Troop to some other Place. And as he was a Person of Humour, and a proper Assurance, he generally, like a Cat, skimm'd off the fat Cream, and left the lean Milk to those that stay'd behind."

Tony was simply shrewder, not meaner, than the others, or, as Chetwood doggerelizes it:

*If various Dealers the same Goods exhibit,
They wish each other dangling on a Gibbet.*

The same historian relates the story of the trunk full of "cabbage-stocks, bricks and stones" left by Tony with a certain landlord, as security for an unpaid board bill. To his credit, be it recorded, as soon as his circumstances permitted, he returned and redeemed the pawn; for, "his Finances, like those of Kingdoms, were sometimes at the Tide of Flood, and often at low Ebb".

Scholars acquainted with the evolution of the theatre in England will recall that the first third of the 18th century was a critical period in the history of the Stage. In the first place, there was a determined effort to bring under the control of the Crown (through the Lord Chamberlain's office) all theatrical amusements throughout the kingdom; while at the same time, the

patentees of the two national theatres, claiming under the patents issued by Charles II to Killigrew and Davenant an absolute monopoly of stage performances in London, stubbornly defended their sinecures against royal encroachments, on the one hand, and on the other they were jealously alert to stamp out all competition of every nature whatsoever. These contests culminated in the famous Licensing Act of 1737, rightly regarded as the most illiberal legislation ever enacted in connection with the acted drama in England. As the precursor of this Act, Sir John Barnard in 1735 introduced into Parliament the Playhouse Bill, aimed ostensibly at a new theatre in the East End (the Goodman's Fields Theatre) erected by Thomas Odell toward the close of 1729. The real purpose of Barnard's measure was to clinch the monopoly of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, and to bring under the control of the Lord Chamberlain "all common players of Interludes" within the realm. Of course the bill met with stiff opposition; the term "interlude" was all-inclusive, taking in Jarley waxworks, Aston Medleys, and what not? Among others, was a "Petition of Anthony Aston, Comedian", read in the House of Commons April 14, 1735. The petitioner conceived that he would be ruined if

the proposed act passed into law, and prayed that he might be heard personally, "he being poor, and having no Money to fee Counsel". This request was granted; and one wonders which it was, the desire to be entertained, or the love of justice, that moved the committee to grant Tony's plea. The speech was printed by its author, and shows the acumen and egotism of the man. He shrewdly saw the threatened danger to his profession in the Playhouse Bill: it would give to the magistrates "the whip-hand of us all, except the Patentees", who would still remain immune within the stronghold of their royal patents. Tony then launched upon one of his characteristic boasts: he was "esteem'd through the Kingdom as a Top Proficient, . . . and am now (without Gaul to any Actor) willing to contend from the *Ghost* in *Hamlet*, to *Hob* in the *Country Wake*", a fair enough challenge it would seem. He declared that his Medley was a paragon of decency and good manners, "and hath been admitted and applauded . . . when and where common Players have been rejected; nay, I have been invited often into the Private Apartments of the Heads of Colleges, and Noble, and Gentlemen's Houses; so that if it had not been for accumulated Misfortunes, I had been in easy Circumstances". He closed his ad-

dress with the request that he be given a monopoly of the Medley business in Great Britain, "or be otherwise provided for, that I may not starve in my declining Years".

There were numerous similar attacks on Barnard's proposed measure, and these were so successful that the bill was withdrawn on April 30, 1735. Tony's allusion to "accumulated misfortunes" had something to it more than the conventional hard-luck story. In addition to the harsh treatment at the hands of the patentees, complained of, at one time during his career Tony was afflicted with consumption, against which he seems to have put up a winning fight. At another period, the date of which I have been unable to fix definitely, he invested in a public house in Portsmouth. The money which he put into this venture must have been the inheritance he received at the death of his father; for it is inconceivable that he ever should have accumulated a sufficiency of his own earnings to invest in any substantial business. Sometime prior to this diversion, it is possible that he was initiated into the tapster's calling by Richard Estcourt, the actor, who at one time seems to have owned the Bumper Tavern in James St., Covent Garden. This conclusion is deduced from an advertisement in the *Spectator* No. 262

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(January 1, 1712), in which a Mr. Estcourt recommends his "neat natural wines" to the public who will be served "with the utmost Fidelity by his old Servant Trusty Anthony, who has so often adorned both the Theaters in England and Ireland". If this be our Tony (and the allusion to his acting is justifiable grounds for suspecting that it is), it was his first service under the sign of a bunch of grapes, as the commendation (which carries also another sign of the times) says of him that, "as he is a person altogether unknowing to the Wine Trade it cannot be doubted but that he will deliver the Wine in the same natural Purity that he received it from the Merchants". The reference by Estcourt to his "old Servant Trusty Anthony", is a little mystifying. Aston makes but a single passing allusion to Estcourt in his *Supplement*; if the relationship between the two had ever been as close as that indicated in the advertisement quoted, it would seem that Tony would have made some direct reference to it. However, there is no doubting that Aston kept an "elegant" tavern at Portsmouth, if we may believe his own statement to that effect in the recently discovered *Sketch*. He appeared to like the Blue Flag as he called it, "where I was generously used by the worthy Corporation, Officers, and others,

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and there might have continued, had some of my Family proved Honest". With this remark he drops the subject as suddenly as he introduces it.

IV.

Aside from the activities recounted in the foregoing outline, there is left to record the output of Tony Aston's pen. Here, again, the perennial characteristic of the man crops out: there is more of boast and promise than real achievement. The verses scribbled during his school-days have not been preserved, save the half dozen couplets quoted near the beginning of this sketch; but from these we may judge of the rest, as the man himself changed little from boyhood to old age. Indeed, if there is any marked difference between his early effort and later compositions, the balance tips in favor of the former.

Not many of Aston's "plays" are extant. Baker (*Biographia Dramatica*), quoting Chetwood, says that Tony wrote a piece called *Love in a Hurry* which was acted without success at the Smock-Alley Theatre in Dublin in 1709. Chetwood mentions no date in connection with this dramatic effort, and, so far as I know, Chetwood is the sole authority for its existence. But there is no reason for doubting that the play was written and acted, for, as already pointed out,

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Chetwood has been, until now, our only authority on Anthony Aston. It is probable that the piece had its title changed when it was printed, if it ever was printed, or, what is more probable, *Love in a Hurry* was the sub-title and was omitted from the printed edition. This I conjecture from the fact that Aston did have a play printed in Dublin in 1709, bearing the title, "The Coy Shepherdess, a Pastoral, as it was Acted at the Theatre Royal." In 1712 this was reprinted in London with the following title-page: Pastora: / or, the / Coy Shepherdess. / An / Opera. / As it was Perform'd / By His Grace the Duke of / Richmond's Servants / At / Tunbridge-Wells / In the Year 1712. / Written by / Anthony Aston, Comedian. This piece is slight from every approach, and is beneath criticism. It could not, in and of itself possibly have furnished more than a twenty minutes entertainment, without the addition of stage "business" for the real "show". It is difficult to conceive why it was called an "opera", or how it possibly could have formed the basis of amusement of any sort in any age. But then we have our own comic operas to answer for.

Much later than *The Coy Shepherdess* appeared *The Fool's Opera*. I have placed this conjecturally in the year 1730, although it is pos-

sible that it appeared later than that date. Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was acted early in 1728, and as it was widely imitated it is possible that it furnished Aston with the suggestion, although the chief resemblance is in the titles. The full title of Tony's book is, *The / Fool's Opera; / or, the / Taste of the Age. / Written by Mat. Medley. / And Perform'd by / His Company in Oxford. / To which is prefix'd / A / Sketch / of the / Author's life, / Written by Himself. /* This is a very rare book, not on account of the intrinsic worth of the "opera", but because of the "Sketch" (which is suffixed, not prefixed as stated on the title-page). The British Museum probably possesses the only copy in existence. It is the only authoritative account of the life of Anthony Aston thus far unearthed, and its existence was not suspected until I discovered it a few years ago. It has been largely drawn upon for the foregoing pages, and is of such singular importance as to justify a reprinting at this time. Its general characteristics are the same as those of the *Brief Supplement* (which is also reprinted in this volume), although more ragged in style, and less coherent and more crude in every way. The two pamphlets are alike in the vulgar tone which dominates them both, and in the egotism of the author. The two documents were appar-

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ently set up and printed on the same press. A "To the Reader", prefixed to the *Fool's Opera*, informs us that it "was first Acted with universal Satisfaction in a Person of Quality's House, by People of the first Rank, for their own Diversion; who, I must needs say, did all the Characters Justice, especially the *Fool*, who out-acted himself". The "Person of Quality" is not designated, but the "People of the first Rank" are set down as,

Poet	Mr. Aston Sen.
Fool	Mr. Aston, Jun.
Lady	Mrs. Motteux
Maid	Mrs. Smith

The preface closes with this whimsy: "N. B. I hereby Own to have Received for the Copy of this OPERA One Thousand Three Hundred Forty Four Pounds, Nineteen Shilling and Eleven Pence Three Farthings,—All in Mr. Wood's Half-pence." Inset at the top of the frontispiece is a medallion effigy, labelled "Tony Aston," but, although a rarity, its likeness to the original may be doubted.

In passing, it is of interest to note that Aston's company was not confined to his own small family, as hitherto generally supposed. In addition to the Mrs. Smith and the Mrs. Motteux mentioned in the above cast of characters, four other

names appear in Tony's company at other times. These were Champneys and Leigh, Mrs. Dumene and Mrs. Lee. These names appear among the *dramatis personae* of the *Coy Shepherdess*, and were probably the "additional company" mentioned in the advertisements of 1717.

The play which Tony says he wrote in South Carolina "on the Subject of the Country", as well as the poetry written in New York the following Winter, probably never got printed. This may also be stated of the many songs, prologues, and epilogues which he composed to "fill up the chinks of the slender meal" served up in his Medleys. Some of these, doubtless, were never as much as written down, but were simply improvisations out of Tony's surplus audacity and waggery. However, *belles-lettres* have not suffered for the omission, if the extant samples of Tony's "undaunted genius" are representative of the others.

On the other hand, his failure to write down his memoirs of the stage is a genuine loss, judging from the quality of the *Brief Supplement* to Colley Cibber's *Apology*. The *Brief Supplement* is most unique. The criticisms of the actors and actresses included within the author's purview are, of course, partial, sometimes trivial, and sometimes exaggerated. But Aston here does

what scarcely another contemporary was able to do, namely, he humanizes the persons dealt with and of. Eschewing mere platitudes, he justifies or condemns by pointing to concrete excellences and palpable faults,—to specific tones and gestures, to glances and attitudes, to personal mannerisms and even to physical defects and virtues which impeded or enhanced the effectiveness of the particular character he writes about. Bellchamber, who first reprinted the *Brief Supplement* in his "Cabinet" in 1808,¹ is very indignant at Aston's characterization of Betterton, but, in this instance, Bellchamber's prejudice is so marked as to neutralize what might otherwise stand for an excellent judgment. Moreover, he ignores the fact that Aston takes for his text the quotation, *Nemo sine crimine vivit*, and emphasizes that it is an antidote to Cibber's *Apology* that he is preparing. As for the depiction of Betterton, Tony states very clearly that he is writing about the great actor as he knew him, that is, as he appeared in his later years on the stage. And, after all, who has bestowed more intelligent praise, or, which is more to the purpose, who has reproduced a *living* Betterton so well? The same is true of the other portraits in

1. At the end of the second volume of his excellent reprint of Cibber's *Apology*, the late R. W. Lowe has very satisfactorily reproduced Aston's *Brief Supplement* (1889).

the *Brief Supplement*: they are flesh-and-blood characters, this one with a wry mouth, that with a deformed shoulder, a splay foot, a mole marked, or pock-fretted face, and so on. The stories related of the various artists are relevant in interpreting their temperaments, their foibles, their benevolences, their vanities, in brief, their human qualities. The little brochure has its faults, both of omission and commission; but who would alter it if he could?

The *Sketch* differs from the *Brief Supplement* in that it is entirely autobiographical. The style is execrable—in fact, it cannot be said to possess a style; but then, as already pointed out, it is nothing more than choppy notes jotted down as the basis of a more pretentious work. But if the expression is not felicitous, or the thought lucid, or the scrappy facts lack idealism, we must not forget that all of this, after all, is fairly reflective and characteristic of the man himself. Indeed, we thus learn more about Tony Aston than if he had embroidered the crude facts with a pseudo-morality or padded them with a fictional heroism. The sketch is as the man was, uncouth, undeveloped, devoid of high aims, vigorous, vulgar and erratic.

As an actor Tony Aston was more the imitator and impersonator than the original com-

edian. He was something above the Bartholomew Fair mountebank, and was decidedly outclassed by the leading comedians of the legitimate stage. He had much histrionic ability but lacked the originality to create great comic characters. On the other hand, while he shone brightest in low, broad comedy, he chose for his masters those who were original and pre-eminent in their respective *rôles*; and Aston was no mean disciple, despite his over-consciousness of the fact. Thus, for example, he confesses to have copied Joe Haines the creator of Roger in *Æsop*, and Dogget's interpretation of Fondlewife in *The Old Bachelor*. But Tony was too "idle" and "unworthy" (to use the language which he himself applied to his youth) ever to become thorough master of his art, and this fact, taken in conjunction with his ambition and native ability, partially accounts for a versatility that usually fell short of genuine achievement in any line. It also serves to explain his self-appreciation in the assertion that he "succeeded in many characters", on the one hand, and, on the other, the refusal of the London managers to see him in that light. Lazy ability is fatal to great results; industrious mediocrity often accomplishes wonders.

We are fortunate in having preserved for us

a brief contemporaneous estimate of Tony Aston as an actor, and although the appreciation is used for a comparison in politics, it is none the less accurate. In the *Craftsman* No. 267 (August 14, 1731), after berating Walpole for gathering unto himself the various powers of the government, followed by a plundering of the nation, the writer attempts to elucidate his contention by the following object lesson: "Tony Aston is a Monopolizer of this Kind; he plays all Characters; he fills none; he is the whole Comedy in his single Person; he receives, indeed, the Salary of Proper Actors, and this is poor *Tony's* only View; for his Plea is Necessity; he confesses his Inability to sustain so many Parts, and picks your Pocket of half a Crown, with some Appearance of Modesty; but if he should enter with the Air of a *Drawcansir*, and swear that He alone was fit to represent every Character, that He alone was fit to receive all the Pay, and that he would never permit any one else to tread the Stage, I think he would be hiss'd by the People".

Other characteristics of Anthony Aston, which stand out boldly in the *Sketch* and in the *Brief Supplement*, need no elaboration or lengthy comment. Egotism, mendicancy, and coarse-mindedness are everywhere shamelessly featured; and these were inherent faults of the

man, not to be charged against the "age" in which he lived. Bellchamber, in a fury, says that Tony was "notorious for his frauds, ignorance and audacity". This is the interpretation he placed on Chetwood's short account of Aston. Audacious, Tony certainly was, but always so waggishly so that one is disposed to condone the fault. As for the charge of fraud, that is based entirely on the story related by Chetwood of Tony's cramming his trunk full of rubbish and leaving it with his landlord as security for an unpaid board bill, the landlord all the while believing that the trunk was filled with a valuable wardrobe which he was satisfied would soon be forfeited to him. That there was deception on Tony's part is beyond cavil; but he had no other recourse in those days. Bellchamber fails to call attention to the cupidity of the landlord, and to the more important fact that Aston returned as soon as he was able to do so and paid the landlord in full. A dishonest person would not have done that. Even when Tony was dependent outright on charity, he never shows ingratitude, but always takes pains to acknowledge the assistance received, and never speaks of a benefactor except in the most respectful and endearing terms. Coming to the last charge, Aston was not a prodigy of learning or culture, and

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his bad French and smattering of Latin, to say nothing of his tortured English, is sufficient grounds to speak of him as ignorant. But then there is the shrewdness and naïveté of the man to balance the account. In short, Tony was just Tony Aston, and we must accept him and his work as they have come to us, not as we would have them.

The exact date of Anthony Aston's birth is not known, but it was about 1682. Of the time and place of his death we are even more ignorant. From internal evidence, we know that he wrote his *Brief Supplement* as late as the latter part of 1747; and Chetwood states as a belief that he was still alive and strolling in 1749. This half conjecture is significant. Tony's mode of living was dissociated from all that gives to home "a local habitation and a name", and yet he was so well-known of all men and so common withal, that he had come to be a memory, though still alive! I know not what Parish Clerk recorded his death. He emulated greater actors than himself, notably, Thomas Dogget, and claimed superiority over Colley Cibber in certain characters; he probably caused more people to forget life's tribulations for a brief hour than most men who trod the stage in his time.

DESIGN

A
S K E T C H
O F T H E
L I F E, &c.
O F
MR. ANTHONY ASTON

Commonly call'd TONY ASTON

Written by Himself - - Now ALL ALIVE



INTENDING hereafter to write my HISTORY at large, I now oblige my *Printer* with this cursory Touch, in order to make him *come down* handsomely for what will be anon. I have often been in the mind to commit some criminal Fact, on purpose to oblige him with my *Dying Speech*; but as I consider'd he would get more by my LIFE, I was resolved to continue *Honest and Merry*: so, *ad rem* at once.

My merry Hearts,

You are to know me as a Gentleman, Lawyer, Poet, Actor, Soldier, Sailor, Exciseman, Publican; in *England, Scotland, Ireland, New-York, East and West Jersey, Maryland, (Virginia on both sides Cheesapeek,) North and South Carolina, South Florida, Bahama's, Jamaica, Hispaniola*, and often a Coaster by all the same; like the Signs of the *Ablative Case*, in, through, with, for, from, and by; for I been *in 'em*, travell'd *through 'em*, paid *for 'em*, come off genteely *from 'em*, and liv'd *by 'em*. — Well, hold; — for I'll clear as I go — My Father was *Richard Aston, Esq*; Principal of *Furnivals-Inn*, and Secretary of the *King's-Bench Office*; of *Staffordshire* Extraction, and liv'd in *Brooke's Market*; and, tho' a Lawyer,

liv'd and dy'd an honest Man; whose Place has not been better officiated since. My Mother was Daughter of Col. *Cope* of *Drummelly-Castle* in the County of *Armagh*, in the Kingdom of *Ireland*. As for my Relations every where, I don't care a Groat for 'em, which is just the Price they set upon me. I had my Grammatical Education at my beloved town of *Tamworth* in *Staffordshire*, tho' I had a previous Tincture of Whims by one *Ramsay*, who first innoculated the Itch, and also good *Latin*.—Of my innocent Pranks and mercurial Disposition there, I must forbear 'till my Volume is extant; also of the early Seeds of Whim which push'd out in my Infant Puerility. —I was an unworthy, idle, unlucky clerk, first to Mr. *Randal* of the Six-Clerks-Office; after that transplanted to that incomparable Man Mr. *Paul Jodrel*, and I still preserved my Mercurials, as much as he his indefatigable ingenious Industry: Instead of copying Bills, Answers, &c. I was prone to making Verses, reading Plays; and, instead of going to proper Offices, I went to see *Dogget* make comical Faces in the last two Acts: This you must think gave me a Taste of the Girls, and which I am afraid I shall never leave off. Well! — Farewel Lawyer for the present.

A *Poet* I commenc'd at seven Years old, but

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a Burlesque one, as thus, writing in Praise of *Peace*, shows:

*One in a Fight, when standing at his Ease,
Did boldly eat a piece of Bread and Cheese;
His Fellow ask'd him for a little Crumb,
Tho' not so big as Supernaculum;
The greedy Dog deny'd: why should he grudge
it?*

*He had above a Peck within his Budget:
But while his Hand cramm'd meat into his
Gullet,*

*His Mouth receiv'd a spiteful leaden Bullet:
Now Bread and Cheese lies trampled on the
Ground,*

*And such another Piece can ne'er be found;
So I'm resolv'd I never War will make,
But e'er keep Peace for Bread and Cheese's sake.*

Says my School-master, *Antrobus*, Give *Aston* nothing but Bread and Cheese these three Days. — As for an *Actor*, it needs no Description: I wish his Majesty would order me to contend in my Way, I would venture Shame and the odd Hits. — I am obliged to appear thus vain, because of the many repulses, Shams, and male-Treatment I have received from those in Power.

Now for the *Soldier*; — I took Delight in obliging my Friend Serjeant *Callow*, whenever

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General (then Colonel) *Wightman* muster'd, which was in my Father's Life-Time; and I mention that, because the World knew my Father's Income, and that it was a sprightly Novelty of mine, .and no mean Recourse. The Use of the Manuals, &c. was advantageous to me in foreign Parts, among the *Careolians, Floridans, and Carolinians*; of which in my *Volume* at large.

The *Sailor* was indeed more caught as my Delight, and sometimes compulsive, when wreck'd, or urg'd by the different rumaging of other Matters I was capable of, when Martial Law was in Force, and the Courts of Justice were silent. I can say by Sailing, as *Hamlet* does when the Wind is *North East*, I know a Hawk from a Hand-saw; and, in plain Terms, I acknowledge I know not much, affect *a little* of every Thing (except Acting *Prologue*, &c. writing and Face-making, and singing them with any Man.

I would not have you think that I mention being an *Exciseman* as a Credit to me; no, to screen *that*, I once pass'd for a *Corn-Cutter*: And yet could I see a Lady of a Thousand a Year, of a triangular Form, I know how to drop a Perpindicular upon her; know the perfect Use of my sliding Rule; how to take my Gage

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in the middle of Inches, and not to put a false Diameter under a fix'd Utensil; but no more of that ———

Now for the *Blue Flag*: I was always for the *Nick* and *Froth*; and altho' it is a copious Subject to run *Bams* on, I say no more, but that I kept an elegant Tavern on the Parade at *Portsmouth*, where I was generously used by the worthy Corporation, Officers, and others, and there might have continued, had some of my Family proved honest.

Well; when I came from my Master *J——l*, I went into the *Old Play-house*, and succeeded in many Characters; went over into *Ireland*; return'd; travell'd with Mr. *Cash*, *Dogget*, *Booker*, *Mins*; and then embarqued a Passenger with Capt. *Walters* in the *Diligence* for *Jamaica*, who put me in Irons, because one *Betty Green* (who went by the Name of *Pritchard*, and was married to a Gentleman of *Lincolns-Inn*, and had a Thousand Pounds given her to quit him) would not remember or take Notice of me, because she had a great Cargo on board; but the Captain paid dear for it afterwards: We were eleven Weeks before we made the *Disseado*, buried no Passengers. I took to the Law, having a good Friend there, who help'd me to a Study of Books of Mr. *Scarlet's* of *Kings-town*.

I got Money, kept my Horse, liv'd gay, boarded at my Widows, pay'd all off; when Governor *Selwyn* invited me to bear Arms in his Regiment as a Cadet. I had my own frank Practice of the Law and Quarters, and, as is well known, kept Company with the best of the Island. The Governor's Death made me quit the same; because, altho' it is known to the surviving Officers I should have had the first vacant Commission, yet the succeeding Governor, Mr. *H—d—e* neither lov'd me, nor Mr. *Keyting*, both Cadets and Gamesters. I had my Certificate from Secretary *Nichols*; embarked on Board the *Diligence* of London, Capt. *Wild*; and, altho' we came to the Windward Passage, was Cast-away in the Gulph, on the South Sand off *Port-Royal* Harbour, twenty Leagues Southward of the Harbour of *Charles-Town* in *South Carolina*; but the Manner and Horror of that is inexpressible in this Abstract: ——— We were saved by a *Bermudas* Sloop (that heard our plaintive Guns) in *Port-Royal* Harbour, where Governor *Moore* anchor'd, in the Beginning of Queen *Anne's* Reign, with a small Fleet design'd against St. *Augustine*. I (after being plunder'd by the *Bermudians*), was carry'd to him, condoled, treated, and went with him to *Augustine*; where of the Fort, its Harbour, Platform, my

Commissions, the Reinforcement of the *Spaniards* from *Havanna*, of their Blocking-up the Harbour, burning our own Vessels, Fatigue of Travelling, of the *Indians*, *Hunger*, burning Towers, and other surprizing Accidents, will be at large described in a Volume. — Well, we arriv'd in *Charles-Town*, full of Lice, Shame, Poverty, Nakedness and Hunger: — I turned *Player* and *Poet*, and wrote one Play on the Subject of the Country; — and I then had a Commission of Lieutenant of their Guards given me by the Governor Sir *Nathaniel Johnson*, which Commission being too much superintended and insulted by one *Herne*, my Captain, that formerly rode in the Life-Guards, I laid it down; since he caus'd me to do that Duty he was to Relieve every other Night; and the Governor taking his Part, — I embarqu'd on Board a Sloop of 95 Tun, one *Reynolds*, Master, for *Corotuc*, or *N. Carolina*.—Off *Cape-fear* had the wind at *N. W.*, a frightful Storm; we scudded with bare Poles a-fore the Wind, when I was lash'd to the Helm to steer for twelve Hours (a long and terrible Description :) Well, our Vessel was knock'd all to pieces, as were all the Clothes wash'd off me; I was cast a-shore in the River *Stone*, and was reliev'd by Mr. *Allen*, who cloth'd me, and honest *Abraham Waights* fed me for a Month.



I went again to *Charles-Town*, and got a frank Passage for *New-York* on board a sloop of *Wessel Wessels*, *Cobus Kirkstead*, Master; but being in *November*, the *Nor-westers* blew us from the *New-York* coast. As soon as we snuff'd the Land, which after nine Days Boxing, we were glad to gain the Capes of *Virginia*, put into *Little Moni*, hired a Boat cross the Bay into *Nanticoke* River, — was courteously entertain'd by one *Hickes*, an *Indian* Justice of Peace and a Quaker; he was a Convict, and one of *Whitney's* gang, — married his Mistress (a Widow:) He lent me, *Dick Oglethorp* and *Lewen*, (both Passengers) Horses to *Newcastle* in *Philadelphia*. We lay at *Story's* — enjoy'd — rode through *Elizabeth-Town*, and so in the Packet to *New-York*. — There I lighted of my old Acquaintance *Jack Charlton*, Fencing-Master, — and Counsellor *Reignieur*, sometime of *Lincolns-Inn*, supply'd me with Business — 'till I had the honour of being acquainted with that brave, honest, unfortunate Gentleman, Capt. *Henry Pullein*, whose Ship (the *Fame*) was burnt in the *Bermudas*; he (to the best of his Ability) assisted me — so that after acting, writing, courting, fighting that Winter — My kind Captain *Davis*, in his Sloop built at *Rhode*, gave me free Passage for *Virgina*, where the

noble Governor *Nicholson* treated me handsomely till the Fleet under Commodore *Evans* in the *Dreadnought* with *Oxford*, *Falkland*, *Foy*, &c. convoy'd about 500 Sail out of the Capes. The generous Captain *Pulman*, Master of the *Hunter* Hag-boat of *London*, gave me my Passage Home, and dear Captain *Pullen* my Punch and Extraordinaries — The *Foy* was taken by a *St. Malo* Fleet, fitted out to intercept us, which bare down, yet soon tack'd and went of. Next Day, Captain *Underdown* took the *Quebeck* Ship from *Bourdeaux*. We arriv'd in the Downs in *August* — up to *London* — marry'd a *Bartholomew-Fair* Lady — so being disappointed by Colonel *Salisbury*, with whom I had enter'd on Promise of the first Commission that fell, when his Detachment went to *Portugal*. — Continued up and down in *England*, *Scotland*, *Ireland*, acting 'till I set up my *MEDLEY* — sometimes increasing, sometimes decreasing in Circumstance; Hopes, Friends, Patience — and still have liv'd handsomely by God's Providence — Force of my undaunted Genius — For, look'ee Brethren, it is appointed for all Men once to die, and (as *Adrastus* says) *Who would grieve for that which in a Day must pass?* — and again,

*Whose Knowledge from the Depth of Wisdom
Springs,*

Nor vainly fears inevitable Things.

If the Sun shines by Day, and the Stars by Night
&c.—Life's a Bite — You have it, have you?
— The Wise liv'd Yesterday — You snotty Dab
of a Puritan! — Sling your Gob, and sob your
Guts out — It's all a-Case, there's still a Hole
in my Kettle — Ay, but says another, Why
I'll get another shall contradict him — and
another him — Mankind are all *Quakers*;
there's no convincing of 'em — Let me see
you laugh now! Why look at me: Ha! ha!
ha! There are but two sorts of men, *Scaramouch*
and *Harlequin*. If you're grave, you're a Fool;
if trifling, you're a Fool: — *Ergo*, You're a
Fool; *be what you will!* — Is that *Logic* or
no? — I'll bring a Clown from the Plough
shall talk better.—

'Tis silly, that People can't like a Thing un-
less they know the Name on't. — *Hamlet's*
Munchin Maligo, is a better Answer than any
other to so trifling a Querist. — What then,
say you, we are not to be banter'd by a frothy
Fellow, and lay out our Money for such Stuff.—
Why, do not be angry, Friend: If I mock you
with your own Face and Gesture, then you'll

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see what a Fool you are. — That makes Com-
edies useful. — Come, laugh again now:
Why you came crying into the World; go out
laughing, do *Jack*, for Variety's Sake— What!
you're asham'd to look such an Ass. — Come,
frown and strain hard, as if you were at Stool,
and look like a Lion.— There's a brave Boy!
you shall be Captain of the Train-bands. —
I'll wait on you to Morrow about Dinner-time
—and, 'till then,

I am your humble Servant,

A. ASTON.

W. R. CHETWOOD'S SKETCH

—OF—

ANTHONY ASTON

From *A General History of the Stage*
(1749)

From Chetwood's *General History of the Stage*
(1749)

Mr. *ANTHONY ASTON*, commonly called
TONY.

This Person was bred an Attorney in *England*; but, having a smattering of Wit and Humour, he left the Study of the Law for Parts on the Stage. He strain'd forth a Comedy which was acted on the Theatre in *Smock-alley*, call'd *Love in a Hurry*, but with no Success. He play'd in all the Theatres in *London*, but never continued long in any; his Way of living was peculiar to himself and Family, resorting to the principal Cities and Towns in *England* with his *Medley*, as he call'd it, which consisted of some capital Scenes of Humour out of the most celebrated Plays. His Company were generally composed of his own Family, himself, his Wife and Son; between every Scene, a Song or Dialogue of his own Composition, fill'd up the Chinks of the slender Meal. He pretended a Right to every Town he entered; and if a Company came to any Place where he exhibited his Compositions, he would use all his Art to evacuate the Place of

these Interlopers, as he called them. He was never out of his Way; or if he met with a sightly House when he was Itinerant, he would soon find the Name, Title, and Circumstances of the Family, curry them over with his humorous Verse, and by that means get something to bear his Charges to his next Station. His *Finances*, like those of Kingdoms, were sometimes at the Tide of *Flood*, and often at low *Ebb*. In one, where his Stream had left the Chanel dry, yet ready to launch out on a trading Voyage without a Cargo, or Provision, he called up his Landlord, to whom there was something due, told him of his Losses in his present Voyage, and being sent for to another Place, desired he would lend him a small Sum upon his *Wardrobe* (which he shew'd him in a large Box) ten times the Value of the Debt owing, or the Sum borrow'd. The honest Landlord, seeing a proper Security, easily comply'd, gave him the Sum demanded, lock'd up the Trunk, put the Key in his Pocket, and retired. But as no Vessel can make a Voyage without Sails, and other proper Materials, he had contriv'd a false bottom to this great Box, took out the Stuffing, and by Degrees, sent of his Wardrobe by his Emissaries, unperceiv'd. And that the Weight should not detect him, he filled up the void with Cabbage-

stocks, Bricks and Stones cloath'd in Rags to prevent moving, when the Vehicle was to be taken the next Morning into the Landlord's Custody. Everything succeeded to his Wish, and away went *Tony*, but far wide of the Place mentioned to mine Host. A Week was the stated time of Redemption, which the Landlord saw elapse with infinite Satisfaction (for he had a Bill of Sale of the Contents in the Trunk); he open'd it with great Pleasure; but when he saw the fine Lining! he was motionless, like a Statue carv'd by a bungling Hand. He had recourse to Revenge. A Bailiff with proper Directions was sent to the Place mentioned; but if he had discover'd the least Wit in his Anger, he might have thought *Tony* knew better than to tell him the Truth. I only mention this little Story, to let the Reader know the Shifts the *Itinerant* Gentry are sometimes put to. For *Tony*, when his *Finances* were in Order, and cur'd of the Consumption, honestly paid him. I have had this Tale both from *Tony* and the Landlord, who then kept the *Black-Boy* Inn at *Chelmsford* in *Essex*.

If *Tony* by chance ever came to a Town where a Company of *Showmen* (as People oft call them) had got in before him, he presently declar'd War with them; and his general Con-

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ditions of Peace were, that they should act a Play for his Benefit, that he might leave the Seige, and march with his small Troop to some other Place. And as he was a Person of Humour, and a proper Assurance, he generally, like a Cat, skimm'd off the fat Cream, and left the lean Milk to those that stay'd behind. I believe he is Travelling still, and is as well known in every Town as the Post-Horse that carries the Mail. He shall make his *Exit* with the following two Lines:

*If various Dealers the same Goods exhibit,
They wish each other dangling on a Gibbet.*

TONY ASTON'S
BRIEF SUPPLEMENT TO
COLLEY CIBBER'S
APOLOGY

A BRIEF
SUPPLEMENT
TO
COLLEY CIBBER, Esq.
HIS
LIVES

*Of the late FAMOUS
ACTORS and ACTRESSES*

SI TU SCIS, MELIOR EGO

By ANTHONY {
Vulgo TONY } ASTON



Printed for the AUTHOR.



*R. CIBBER is guilty of Omission
that he hath not given us any De-
scription of the several Personages'
Beauties or Faults—Faults (I say)
of the several ACTORS, &c. for
Nemo sine crimine vivit.*

*Or, as the late Duke of Buckingham says of
Characters, that, to shew a Man not defective,
..... were to draw
A faultless Monster, that the World ne'er saw.*

A B R I E F
S U P P L E M E N T
TO COLLEY CIBBER, Esq; his
L I V E S
Of the late Famous
ACTORS and ACTRESSES.



MR. BETTERON (although a superlative good Actor) labour'd under ill Figure, being clumsily made, having a great Head, a short thick Neck, stoop'd in the Shoulders, and had fat short Arms, which he rarely lifted higher than his Stomach. — His Left Hand frequently lodg'd in his Breast, between his Coat and Waistcoat, while, with his Right, he prepar'd his Speech. — His Actions were few, but just. — He had little Eyes, and a broad Face, a little Pock-fretten, a corpulent Body, and thick Legs, with large Feet. — He was better to meet, than to follow; for his Aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic; in his latter Time a little Paralytic. — His Voice was low and grumbling; yet he could Time it by an artful *Climax*, which enforc'd universal Attention,

even from the *Fops* and *Orange-Girls*.— He was incapable of dancing, even in a Country-Dance; as was Mrs. *BARRY*: But their good Qualities were more than equal to their Deficiencies.— While Mrs. *BRACEGIRDLE* sung very agreeably in the *LOVES* of *Mars* and *Venus*, and danced in a Country-Dance, as well as Mr. *WILKS*, though not with so much Art and Foppery, but like a well-bred Gentleman. — Mr. *Betterton* was the most extensive Actor, from *Alexander* to Sir *John Falstaff*; but in that last Character, he wanted the Wagghery of *ESTCOURT*, the Drollery of *HARPER*, and Sallaciousness of *JACK EVANS* — But, then, *Estcourt* was too trifling; *Harper* had too much of the *Bartholomew-Fair*; and *Evans* misplace'd his Humour. — Thus, you see what *Flaws* are in *bright Diamonds*:— And I have often wish'd that Mr. *Betterton* would have resign'd the Part of *HAMLET* to some young Actor, (who might have Personated, though not have Acted, it better) for, when he threw himself at *Ophelia's* Feet, he appear'd a little too grave for a young Student, lately come from the University of *Wirtemberg*; and his *Repartees* seem'd rather as *Apopthegms* from a *sage Philosopher*, than the *sporting Flashes* of a young *HAMLET*; and no one else could have pleas'd

the Town, he was so rooted in their Opinion. His younger Cotemporary, (*Betterton* 63, *Powell* 40, Years old) *POWELL*, attempted several of *Betterton's* Parts, as *Alexander*, *Jaffier*, &c. but lost his Credit; as, in *Alexander*, he maintain'd not the Diginty of a King, but *Out-Heroded* *HEROD*; and in his poison'd mad Scene, *out-rav'd all Probability*; while *Betterton* kept his Passion under, and shew'd it most (as Fume smoaks most, when stifled) *Betterton*, from the Time he was dress'd, to the End of the Play, kept his Mind in the same Temperament and Adaptness, as the present Character required. — If I was to write of him all Day, I should still remember fresh Matter in his Behalf; and, before I part with him, suffer this facetious Story of him, and a Country Tenant of his.

Mr. *Betterton* had a small Farm near *Reading*, in the County of *Berks*; and the Countryman came, in the Time of *Bartholomew-Fair*, to pay his Rent. — Mr. *Betterton* took him to the Fair, and going to one *Crawley's* Puppet-Shew, offer'd *Two Shillings* for himself and *Roger*, his Tennant. — *No, no, Sir*, said *Crawley*; *we never take Money of one another*. This affronted Mr. *Betterton*, who threw down the money, and they enter'd. — *Roger* was hugelyously diverted with *Punch*, and bred a great Noise; saying, that

he would drink with him, for he was a merry Fellow. — Mr. *Betterton* told him, he was only a Puppet, made up of *Sticks and Rags*: However, *Roger* still cried out, that he would go and drink with *Punch*. — When Master took him behind, where the Puppets hung up, he swore, he thought *Punch* had been alive. — *However*, said he, *though he be but Sticks and Rags, I'll give him Six-pence to drink my Health*. — At Night, Mr. *Betterton* went to the *Theatre*, when was play'd the *ORPHAN*; Mr. *Betterton* acting *Castalio*; Mrs. *Barry*, *Monimia* — *Well* (said Master) *how dost like this Play*, *Roger*? — *Why, I don't know* (says *Roger*) *It's well enough for Sticks and Rags*.

To end with this *Phoenix* of the Stage, I must say of him, as *Hamlet* does of his Father: He was a Man (take him for all in all) I cannot look upon his like again.

His Favourite, Mrs. *BARRY*, claims the next in *Æstimation*. They were both never better pleas'd, than in Playing together. — Mrs. *Barry* out-shin'd Mrs. *Bracegirdle* in the Character of *ZARA* in the *Mourning Bride*, altho' Mr. *Congreve* design'd *Almeria* for that Favour. — And yet, this fine Creature was not handsome, her Mouth op'ning most on the Right

Side, which she strove to draw t'other Way, and, at Times, composing her Face, as if sitting to have her Picture drawn.— Mrs. *Barry* was middle-siz'd, and had darkish Hair, light Eyes, dark Eyebrows and was inifferently plump:— Her Face somewhat preceded her Action, as the latter did her Words, her Face ever expressing the Passions; not like the Actresses of late Times, who are afraid of putting their Faces out of the Form of Non-meaning, lest they should crack the Cerum, White-Wash, or other Cosmetic, trowl'd on. Mrs. *Barry* had a Manner of drawing out her Words, which became her, but not Mrs. *Braidshaw*, and Mrs. *Porter*, (Successors.)—To hear her speak the following Speech in the ORPHAN, was a Charm:

*I'm ne'er so well pleas'd as when I hear thee
speak,
And listen to the Music of thy Voice.*

And again:

*Who's he that speaks with a Voice so sweet,
As the Shepherd pipes upon the Mountains,
When all his little Flock are gath'ring round
him?*

Neither she, nor any of the Actors of those Times, had any Tone in their speaking, (too

much, lately, in Use). — In *Tragedy* she was solemn and august — in *Free Comedy* alert, easy, and genteel — pleasant in her Face and Action; filling the Stage with variety of Gesture. — She was Woman to Lady *Shelton*, of *Norfolk* (my Godmother) — when Lord *Rochester* took her on the Stage; where, for some Time they could make nothing of her. — She could neither sing, nor dance, no, not in a Country-Dance.

Mrs. *BRACEGIRDLE*, that *Diana* of the Stage, hath many Places contending for her Birth — The most received Opinion is, that she was the Daughter of a Coachman, Coach-maker, or Letter-out of Coaches, in the Town of *Northampton*. — But I am inclinable to my Father's Opinion, (who had a great Value for her reported Virtue) that she was a distant Relation, and came out of *Staffordshire*, from about *Walsal*, or *Wolverhampton*. — She had many Assailants on her Virtue, as Lord *Lovelace*, Mr. *Congreve*, the last of which had her Company most; but she ever resisted his vicious Attacks, and, yet, was always uneasy at his leaving her; on which Observation he made the following Song:

*PIOUS Celinda goes to Pray'rs,
Whene'er I ask the Favour;*

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*Yet, the tender Fool's in Tears,
When she believes I'll leave her.
Wou'd I were free from this Restraint,
Or else had Power to win her!
Wou'd she cou'd make of me a Saint,
Or I of her a Sinner!*

And, as Mr. *Durfey* alludes to it in his Puppet Song in *Don Quixot*,

*Since that our Fate intends
Our Amity shall be no dearer
Still let us kiss and be Friends,
And sigh we shall never come nearer.*

She was very shy of Lord *Lovelace's* Company, as being an engaging man, who drest well: And as, every Day, his Servant came to her, to ask her how she did, she always return'd her Answer in the most obeisant Words and Behaviour, *That she was indifferent well, she humbly thank'd his Lordship.* — She was of a lovely Height, with dark-brown Hair and Eyebrows, black sparkling Eyes, and a fresh blushy Complexion; and, whenever she exerted herself, had an involuntary Flushing in her Breast, Neck and Face, having continually a chearful Aspect, and a fine Set of even white Teeth; never making an *Exit*, but that she left the Audience in an Imitation of her pleasant Countenance. Gen-

teel Comedy was her chief Essay, and that too when in Men's Cloaths, in which she far surmounted all the Actresses of that and this Age. — Yet, she had a Defect scarce perceptible, viz., her right Shoulder a little protended, which, when in Men's Cloaths, was cover'd by a long or Campaign Peruke. — She was finely shap'd, and had very handsome Legs and Feet; and her Gait, or Walk, was free, manlike, and modest, when in Breeches. Her Virtue had its Reward, both in Applause and *Specie*; for it happen'd, that as the Dukes of *Dorset* and *Devonshire*, Lord *Hallifax*, and other Nobles, over a Bottle, were all extolling Mrs. *Bracegirdle's* virtuous Behaviour, *Come*, says Lord *Hallifax* — *You all commend her Virtue, &c. but why do we not present this incomparable Woman with something worthy her Acceptance?* His Lordship deposited 200 Guineas, which the rest made up 800, and sent to her, with Encomiums on her Virtue. — She was, when on the Stage, diurnally Charitable, going often into *Clare-Market*, and giving Money to the poor unemploy'd Basket-women, insomuch that she could not pass that Neighbourhood without the thankful Acclamations of People of all Degrees; so that, if any Person had affronted her, they would have been in Danger of being kill'd directly; and yet

this good Woman was an Actress.—She has been off the Stage these 26 Years or more, but was alive *July 20, 1747*; for I saw her in the *Strand, London*, then — with the Remains of charming *Bracegirdle*.

Mr. *SANDFORD*, although not usually deem'd an Actor of the first Rank, yet the Characters allotted him were such, that none besides, then, or since, ever topp'd, for his Figure, which was diminutive and mean, (being Round-shoulder'd, Meagre-fac'd, Spindle-shank'd, Splay-footed, with a sour Countenance, and long lean Arms) render'd him a proper Person to discharge *Iago, Foresight*, and *Ma'hgnij*, in the VILLAIN. But he fail'd in succeeding in a fine Description of a triumphant Cavalcade, in *Alonzo*, in the MOURNING BRIDE, because his Figure was despicable, (although his Energy was, by his Voice, and Action, enforc'd with great Soundness of Art, and Justice:)—This Person acted strongly with his Face,—and (as King *Charles* said) was the best Villain in the World.—He proceeded from the *Sandfords* of *Sandford*, that lies between *Whitchurch* and *Newport*, in *Shropshire*. — He would not be concern'd with Mr. *Betterton*, Mrs. *Barry*, &c, as a Sharer in the Revolt from

Drury-Lane to Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; but said, This is my Agreement.— To Samuel Sandford, Gentleman, Threescore Shillings a Week.— Phol phol said Mr. Betterton, Three Pounds a Week.— No, no, said Sandford; To Samuel Sandford, Gentleman, Threescore Shillings a Week.— For which Cave Underhill, who was a 1-4 Sharer, would often jeer Sandford; saying, Samuel Sandford, Gent, my Man.— Go, you sot, said Sandford.— To which t'other ever replied, Samuel Sandford, my Man Samuel.

CAVE UNDERHILL, and Mr. *DOGGET*, will be the next treated of.

CAVE UNDERHILL, though not the best Actor in the Course of Precedency, was more admired by the Actors than the Audience — there being no Rivals then in his dry, heavy, downright Way in Low Comedy.— His few Parts were, The first Grave-digger in *HAMLET*,—*Sancho Pancha*, in the first Part of *DON QUIXOT*,—*Ned Blunt*, in the *ROVER*, — *Jacomo*, in the *LIBERTINE*,—and the *Host*, in the *VILLAIN*: — All which were dry, heavy Characters, except in *Jacomo*; in which, when he aim'd at any Archness, he fell into downright Insignificance.— He was

about 50 Years of Age the last End of King *William's* Reign, about six Foot high, long and broad-fac'd, and something more corpulent than this Author; his Face very like the *Homo Sylvestris*, or *Champanza*; for his Nose was flat-tish and short, and his Upper Lip very long and thick, with a wide Mouth and short Chin, a churlish Voice, and awkward Action, (leaping often up with both Legs at a Time, when he conceived any Thing waggish, and afterwards hugging himself at the Thought.) — He could not enter into any serious Character, much more Tragedy; and was the most confin'd Actor I ever saw: And could scarce be brought to speak a short *Latin* Speech in *DON QUIXOT*, when Sancho is made to say, *Sit bonus Populus, bonus ero Gubernator*; which he pronounced thus:

Shit bones and babble arse

Bones, and ears Goble Nature.

He was obliged to Mr. *Betterton* for thrusting him into the Character of *Merrynian* in his *Wanton Wife*, or *Amorous Widow*; but *Westheart Cave* was too much of a Dullman. — His chief Achievement was in *Lolpoop*, in the '*Squire of Alsatia*'; where it was almost impossible for him to deviate from himself: But he did great Injustice to *Sir Sampson Legend* in *Love for Love*, unless it had been true, that

the Knight had been bred a Hog-driver. — In short, *Underhill* was far from being a good Actor — as appear'd by the late *Ben. Johnson's* assuming his Parts of *Jacomo* — the Grave-digger in *Hamlet* — and Judge *Grypus* in *Amphytrion*. — I know, Mr. *Underhill* was much cry'd up in his Time; but I am so stupid as not to know why.

Mr. *DOGGET*, indeed, cannot reasonably be so censur'd; for, whoever decry'd him, must inevitably have laugh'd much, whenever he saw him act.

Mr. *Dogget* was little regarded, 'till he chopped on the Character of *Solon* in the *Marriage-Hater Match'd*; and from that he vegetated fast in the Parts of *Fondlewife* in the *Old Batchelor—Cohgnii*, in the *Villain—Hob*, in the *Country Wake*— and *Ben* the Sailor, in *Love for Love*. — But, on a Time, he suffer'd himself to be expos'd, by attempting the serious Character of *Phorbas* in *Oedipus*, than which nothing cou'd be more ridiculous — for when he came to these Words — (*But, Oh! I wish Phorbas had perished in that very Moment*) — the Audience conceiv'd it was spoke like *Hob* in his Dying-Speech. — They burst out into

a loud Laughter; which sunk *Tom Dogget's* Progress in Tragedy from that Time.

Faelix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.—

But our present LAUREAT had a better Opinion of himself;— for, in a few Nights afterwards, *COLLEY*, at the Old Theatre, attempted the same Character; but was hiss'd, his Voice sounding like Lord *Foppington*. — *Ne Sutor ultra Crepidam*.

Mr. *Dogget* was a little, lively, spract Man, about the stature of Mr. *L——*, Sen. Bookseller in *B—h*, but better built. — His Behaviour modest, chearful, and complaisant. — He sung in Company very agreeably, and in Public very comically. — He danc'd the *Cheshire Round* full as well as the fam'd Capt. *George*, but with much more Nature and Nimbleness. — I have had the Pleasure of his Conversation for one Year, when I travell'd with him in his strolling Company, and found him a Man of very good Sense, but illiterate; for he wrote me Word thus — *Sir, I will give you a hole instead of (whole) Share*. — He dress'd neat, and something fine — in a plain Cloth Coat, and a brocaded Waistcoat: — But he is so recent, having been so often at *Bath*, — *satis est*. — He gave his Yearly Water-Badge,

out of a warm Principle, (being a *staunch Revolution-Whig*.) — I cannot part with this *Non-pareil*, without saying, that he was the most faithful, pleasant Actor that ever was — for he never deceiv'd his Audience — because, while they gaz'd at him, he was working up the Joke, which broke out suddenly in involuntary Acclamations and Laughter. — Whereas our modern Actors are fumbling the dull Minutes, keeping the gaping Pit in Suspense of something delightful a coming, — *Et parturiunt Montes, nascitur ridiculus Mus*.

He was the best Face-player and Gesticulator, and a thorough Master of the several Dialects, except the *Scots*, (for he never was in *Scotland*) but was, for all that, a most excellent *Sawney*. Whoever would see him pictur'd, may view his Picture, in the Character of *Sawney*, at the *Duke's-Head* in *Lynn-Regis*, in *Norfolk*. — While I travell'd with him, each Sharer kept his Horse, and was every where respected as a Gentleman.

Jack Verbruggen, in Point of Merit, will salute you next.

JACK VERBRUGGEN, that rough Diamond, shone more bright than all the artful, polish'd Brilliants that ever sparkled on our Stage.

— (*JACK bore the BELL away*) — He had the Words perfect at one View, and Nature directed 'em into Voice and Action, in which last he was always pleasing — his Person being tall, well-built and clean; only he was a little In-kneed, which gave him a shambling Gate, which was a Carelessness, and became him. — His chief Parts were *Bajazet*, *Oroonoko*, *Edgar* in *King Lear*, *Wilmore* in the *Rover*, and *Cassius*, when Mr. *Betterton* play'd *Brutus* with him. — Then you might behold the grand Contest, viz. whether Nature or Art excell'd — *Verbruggen* wild and untaught, or *Betterton* in the Trammels of Instruction. — In *Edgar*, in *King Lear*, *Jack* shew'd his Judgment most; for his madness was unlimited: Whereas he sensibly felt a Tenderness for *Cordelia*, in these Words, (speaking to her) — *As you did once know Edgar!* — And you may best conceive his manly, wild Starts, by these Words in *Oroonoko*, — *Ha! thou hast rous'd the Lyon his Den; he stalks abroad, and the wild Forest trembles at his Roar:* — Which was spoke like a Lyon, by *Oroonoko*, and *Jack Verbruggen*; for Nature was so predominant, that his second Thoughts never alter'd his prime Performance. — The late Marquess of *Hallifax* order'd *Oroonoko* to be taken from *George Powel*, say-

ing to Mr. *Southern*, the Author, — That *Jack* was the unpolish'd Hero, and wou'd do it best. — In the *Rover* (*Wilmore*) never were more beautiful Scenes than between him, and Mrs. *Bracegirdle* in the Character of *Helena*; for, what with *Verbruggen's* untaught Airs, and her smiling Repartees, the Audience were afraid they were going off the Stage every Moment. — *Verbruggen* was Nature, without Extravagance — Freedom, without Licentiousness — and vociferous, without bellowing. — He was most indulgently soft, when he says to *Imoinda*, — *I cannot, as I wou'd, bestow thee; and as I ought, I dare not.* — Yet, with all these Perfections, *Jack* did, and said, more silly Things than all the Actors besides; for he was drawn in at the common Cheat of Pricking at the Girdle, Cups and Balls, &c. and told his Wife one Day that he had found out a Way to raise a great Benefit. — *I hope*, said she, *you'll have your Bills printed in Gold Letters.* — *No, no, better than that*, said he; *for I'll have the King's-Arms all in Gold Letters.* — As Mr. *Verbruggen* had Nature for his Directress in Acting, so had a known singer, *Jemmy Bowen*, the same in Music: — He, when practising a Song set by Mr. PURCELL, some of the Music told him to grace and run a Division in

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such a Place, *O let him alone*, said Mr. Purcell; *he will grace it more naturally than you, or I, can teach him.* — In short, an Actor, like a Poet,

Nascitur, non fit.

And this Author prizes himself on that Attempt, as he hath had the Judgment of all the best Critics in the Character of *Fondle-wife* in the *Old Batchelor*. — *If you wou'd see Nature*, say they *see* Tony Aston — *if Art*, Colley Cibber; — and, indeed, I have shed mock Tears in that Part often involuntarily.

Mrs. *VERBRUGGEN* claims a Place next. She was all Art, and her Acting all acquir'd, but dress'd so nice, it look'd like Nature. There was not a Look, a Motion, but what were all design'd; and these at the same Word, Period, Occasion, Incident, were every Night, in the same Character, alike; and yet all sat charmingly easy on her. — Her Face, Motion, &c. chang'd at once: But the greatest, and usual, Position was Laughing, Flirting her Fan, and *je ne sçay quois*, — with a kind of affected Twitter. — She was very loath to accept of the Part of *Weldon* in *Oroonoko*, and that with just Reason, as being obliged to put on Men's Cloaths — having thick Legs and Thighs, cor-

pulent and large Posterious; — but yet the Town (that respected her) compounded, and receiv'd her with Applause; for she was the most pleasant Creature that ever appear'd: Adding to these, that she was a fine, fair Woman, plump, full-featur'd; her Face of a fine, smooth Oval, full of beautiful, well-dispos'd Moles on it, and on her Neck and Breast. — Whatever she did was not to be call'd Acting; no, no, it was what she represented: She was neither more nor less, and was the most easy Actress in the World. The late Mrs. OLD-FIELD borrow'd something of her Manner in free Comedy; — as for Tragedy, Mrs. *Verbruggen* never attempted it. *Melanthe* was her Master-piece; and the Part of *Hillaria* in *Tunbridge-Walks* cou'd not be said to be Acted by any one but her. — Her Maiden-Name was Percival; and she was the Widow of Mr. *Mountford*, (who was kill'd by Lord *Mohun*) when Mr. *Verbruggen* married her. — She was the best Conversation possible; never captious, or displeas'd at any Thing but what was gross or indecent; for she was cautious, lest fiery *Jack* shou'd so resent it as to breed a Quarrel; — for he wou'd often say, — *Dammee! tho' I don't much value my Wife, yet no Body shall affront her, by G—d*; and his Sword was drawn

on the least Occasion, which was much in Fashion at the latter End of King *William's* Reign; — at which Time I came on the Stage, when Mr. *Dogget* left it; and then the facetious *Joe Haines* was declining in Years and Reputation, tho' a good Actor and Poet, his Prologues exceeding all ever wrote. — [*Vide Love and a Bottle.*]

JOE HAINES is more remarkable for the witty, tho' wicked, pranks he play'd, and for his Prologues and Epilogues, than for Acting. — He was, at first, a Dancer. — After he had made his Tour of *France*, he narrowly escap'd being seiz'd, and sent to the *Bastile*, for personating an *English* Peer, and running 3000 Livres in Debt in *Paris*; but, happily landing at *Dover*, he went to *London*, where, in *Bartholomew-Fair*, he set up a Droll-Booth, and acted a new Droll, call'd, *The Whore of Babylon, the Devil, and the Pope*. This was in the first Year of King *James II.* when *Joe* was sent for, and roundly admonish'd, by Judge *Pollixsen*, for it. *Joe* reply'd, *That he did it in Respect of his Holiness; for, whereas many ignorant People believed the Pope to be a Beast, he shew'd him to be a fine, comely old Gentleman, as he was; not with Seven Heads, and Ten Horns as the Scotch Parsons describe him.* However, this Affair

spoil'd *Joe's* expiring Credit; for, next Morning, a Couple of Bailiffs seiz'd him in an Action of 20*l.* as the Bishop of *Ely* was passing by in his Coach. — Quoth *Joe* to the Bailiffs, — *Gentlemen, here's my Cousin, the Bishop of Ely, going into his House; let me but speak to him, and he'll pay the Debt and Charges.* The Bailiffs thought they might venture that, as they were within three or four Yards of him. So, up goes *Joe* to the Coach, pulling off his Hat, and got close to it. The Bishop order'd the Coach to stop, whilst *Joe* (close to his Ear) said softly, *My Lord, here are two poor Men, who have such great Scruples of Conscience, that, I fear, they'll hang themselves.* — Very well, said the Bishop. So, calling to the Bailiffs, he said, *You two Men, come to me To-morrow Morning, and I'll satisfy you.* The Men bow'd, and went away. *Joe* (hugging himself with his fallacious Device) went also his Way. In the Morning, the Bailiffs (expecting the Debt and Charges) repair'd to the Bishop's; where being introduced, — *Well,* said the Bishop, *what are your Scruples of Conscience?* — *Scruples!* (said the Bailiffs) *we have no Scruples: We are Bailiffs, my Lord, who, Yesterday, arrested your cousin, Joe Haines, for 20*l.* Your Lordship promised to satisfy us to-day, and we hope*

your Lordship will be as good as your Word. — The Bishop, reflecting that his Honour and Name would be expos'd. (if he complied not) paid the Debt and Charges. — There were two Parts of Plays (*Nol Bluff* in the *Old Batchelor*, and *Roger* in *Æsop*) which none ever touch'd but *Joe Haines*. — I own, I have copied him in *Roger*, as I did Mr. *Dogget* in *Fondlewife*. — But, now, for another story of him.

In the long Vacation, when Harlots, Poets, and Players, are all poor, — *Joe* walking in *Cross-Street* by *Hatton-Gardens*, sees a fine Venison-Pasty come out of *Glassop's* a Pasty-Cook's Shop, which a Boy carried to a Gentleman's House thereby — *Joe* watch'd it; and seeing a Gentleman knock at the Door, he goes to the Door, and ask'd him if he had knock'd at it: *Yes*, said the Gentleman; *the Door is open'd*. — In goes the Gentleman, and *Joe* after him, to the Dining-Room. — Chairs were set and all ready for the Pasty. The Master of the House took *Joe* for the Gentleman's Friend, whom he had invited to Dinner; which being over the Gentleman departed. *Joe* sat still. — Says the Master of the House to *Joe*, *Sir, I thought you would have gone with your Friend!* — *My Friend*, said *Joe*; *alas! I never saw him be-*

fore in my Life. — *No, Sir,* replied the other: *Pray, Sir, then how came you to Dinner here?* — *Sir,* said *Joe*, *I saw a Venison-Pasty carried in here; and, by this Means, have din'd very heartily of it. My Name is Joe Haines,* (said he) *I belong to the Theatre.* — *Oh, Mr. Haines,* (continued the Gentleman) *you are very welcome; you are a Man of Wit; Come, bring t'other Bottle;* which being finish'd, *Joe*, with good Manners, departed, and purposely left his Cane behind him, which he design'd to be an Introduction to another Dinner there: For, next Day, when they were gone to Dinner, *Joe* knock'd briskly at the Door, to call for his Cane, when the Gentleman of the House was telling a Friend of his the Trick he play'd the Day before. — *Pray call Mr. Haines in.* — *So, Mr. Haines,* said he; *sit down and partake of another Dinner.* — *To tell you the Truth,* said *Joe*; *I left my Cane Yesterday on purpose:* At which they all laugh'd. — Now *Joe*, (altho' while greedily eating) was very attentive to a Discourse of Humanity begun, and continued, by the Stranger Gentleman; wherein he advanced, that every Man's Duty was to assist another, whether with Advice, Money, Cloaths, Food, or whatever else. This sort of Principle suited *Joe's* End, as by the Sequel will appear.

The Company broke up, and *Joe*, and the Gentleman, walk'd away, (*Joe* sighing as he went along.) The Gentleman said to him, *What do you sigh for?— Dear Sir*, (quoth *Joe*) *I fear my Landlord will, this Day, seize my Goods for only a Quarter's Rent, due last Week. — How much is the Money?* said the Gentleman. — *Fifty Shillings*, said *Joe*, *and the Patentees owe me Ten Pounds, which will be paid next Week. — Come*, said the Gentleman, *I'll lend thee Fifty Shillings on your Note, to pay me faithfully in three Weeks.* Which *Joe*, with many Promises and Imprecations, sign'd. — But *Joe*, thereafter, had his Eyes looking out before him; and, whenever he saw the Gentleman, would carefully avoid him; which the Gentleman one Day perceiv'd, and going a-cross *Smithfield*, met *Joe* full in the Face, and, in the Middle of the *Rounds*, stopp'd him. Taking him by the Collar, *Sirrah*, said he, *pray pay me now, you impudent, cheating Dog, or I'll beat you into a Jelly.* — *Joe* fell down on his Knees, making a dismal Outcry, which drew a Mob about them, who enquir'd into the Occasion, which was told them; and they, upon hearing it, said to the Gentleman, *That the poor Man could not pay it, if he had it not. — Well*, said he, *let him kneel down, and eat up*

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that thin Sirreverence, and I'll forgive him, and give up his Note. — Joe promis'd he would, and presently eat it all up, smearing his Lips and Nose with the human Conserve. The Gentleman gave him his Note; when Joe ran and embrac'd him, kissing him, and bedaubing his Face; and setting the Mob a hollowing.

The SECOND PART of their LIVES, with the Continuance of JOE HAINES'S Pranks, the Author hopes a fresh Advance for. —In the Interim, he thanks his Friends.

FINIS.

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